

AAAAI – Ask the Expert
3/16/12

Response from Dr. Jay Slater:

My summary of this case: an otherwise healthy military recruit is screened for latex allergy using the Quest lab's test for latex-specific IgE. The stated purpose of the screening test is that severe latex allergy will disqualify [him] for military service. The result is positive although not, apparently, elevated enough for disqualification. The question is whether the recruit should be immunized as required, even though several of the vaccines may contain leached latex allergen.

The predictive value of the positive test, in this case, is uncertain. Quest uses the ImmunoCap assay. In a recent study, Unsel et al (Int Arch Allergy Immunol 2012; 158:281-287) found that 30% and 9% of asymptomatic atopic and non-atopic patients had positive ImmunoCap latex results. Skin testing for latex was negative in all these patients, as was nasal provocation in the subset that consented to the challenge. The study was done in Turkey, but is certainly consistent with US experience.

The amount of latex allergen in vaccines is extremely small, and denying vaccination to this recruit would be an unreasonable overinterpretation of the real risk. Unless there is other information (risk factors, unexplained urticaria in possible exposure situations), I believe that the patient should undergo a full immunization series.

Jay Slater, M.D.